

Message Text

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51

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-11 AGR-20 AID-20 OMB-01 SSC-01 IO-14

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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3032

C O N F I D E N T I A L 4927

E O 11652: GDS

TAGS: EGEN, EAGR, RP, EMIN

SUBJ: RUMORED CHANGES IN PHILIPPINE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AND NATURAL RESOURCES

1. VARIOUS MEMBERS OF THE COUNTRY TEAM HAVE BEEN INFORMED THAT MAJOR CHANGES IN THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES ARE BEING CONSIDERED FOR IMPLEMENTATION IN THE NEAR FUTURE COMMENCING WITH THE DEPARTURE OF SECRETARY ARTURO TANCO. REPORTED CHANGES INCLUDE A SPIN-OFF OF NATURAL RESOURCES FUNCTIONS INTO A NEW DEPARTMENT (WITH FORMER CONGRESSMAN LEIDO AS A POSSIBLE BET TO HEAD THIS NEW DEPARTMENT) AND THE APPOINTMENT OF A NEW AGRICULTURE SECRETARY, UNDERSECRETARY AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY. A STRONG RUMOR IS THAT EXECUTIVE SECRETARY MELCHOR WILL BECOME ACTING SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE IN ADDITION TO HIS OTHER DUTIES IF HE CANNOT PERSUADE UMALI, NOW AN FAO OFFICIAL IN BANGKOK, TO ACCEPT IT.

2. COMMENT: SUCH RUMORS HAVE BEEN COMMONPLACES OF THE MANILA COCKTAIL CIRCUIT FOR MORE THAN A YEAR, AND SECRETARY ARTURO TANCO'S RESIGNATION (OR FIRING)
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HAS BEEN RUMORED WITH SOME FREQUENCY SINCE HIS APPOINT-

MENT MORE THAN THREE YEARS AGO. WE PLACE CONSIDERABLY
GREATER STOCK IN THE CURRENT SPATE BECAUSE OF (A)
TANCO'S LONG KNOWN PROBLEMS OF COOPERATION AND
COORDINATION WITH OTHER RANKING TECHNOCRATS, (B)
RUMORS THAT NEITHER THE PRESIDENT NOR SENIOR TECHNICIANS IN
AGRICULTURE ARE SATISFIED WITH TANCO'S
APPRAISAL OF THE PROSPECTIVE FOOD SUPPLY SITUATION AND (C)
THE SUGGESTION FROM RELIABLE SOURCES THAT TANCO
MAY HAVE BEEN THE SUBJECT OF A COMPLAINT FROM A
MAJOR AMERICAN FIRM FOR A SHAKEDOWN ATTEMPT, WHICH
COULD NOT BE IGNORED. AS A FOURTH REASON OF CONSEQUENCE,
AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES, AT THE PRESENT PACE OF
DEVELOPMENT, OBVIOUSLY ARE TOO MUCH OF A JOB FOR ONE
CABINET OFFICER.
PURNELL

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